

Ellis, Alex

From: Ellis, Alex
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Subject: Interview Opportunity Re: Iran

Iran has been at the top of the news again. The Iran regime got caught this week trying to kidnap journalist Masih Alinejad and four other Iranians. And soon – August 3 – the newly elected president Ebrahim Raisi will be inaugurated and face international condemnation for his history of human rights abuses.

Please consider interviewing **Alireza Jafarzadeh**, deputy director of the Washington Office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, about these topics. His group helped organize a [global conference](#) this month highlighting these issues. It was a Zoom event that attracted 50,000 viewers from 106 countries and supportive remarks by more than 30 bipartisan members of Congress.

To arrange an interview, please contact:

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Below is an op-ed by Alireza that was published in [RealClearPolitics](#).

After Iran's Sham Elections, U.S. Faces New Realities

By Alireza Jafarzadeh

The recent elections in Iran were an historic failure for the outlaw regime. Hobbled by a faltering economy, rampant corruption, and widespread suppression of dissent, the regime lost the support of a growing number of citizens. The U.S. government needs to recognize this deteriorating situation and to act accordingly.

The regime's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei did manage to install his preferred candidate as president, Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi. But his was a Pyrrhic victory. The Iranian Resistance movement led a boycott of the election that even official figures show successfully persuaded most voters to stay home. Tehran admits that nearly 80 percent of voters in the capital of Tehran and 58 percent of voters across the country failed to show up at the polls or vote for any candidates last month. The Resistance's network, based on its observers on the ground, estimates that the actual turnout was below 10 percent.

Whatever the real numbers were, dissent clearly has been mounting since the November 2019 uprisings that brought tens of thousands of people into the streets in more than 200 Iranian cities. Protesters openly shouted, "Hardliners, reformers, the game is now over" and "death to the dictator." Citizens were willing to risk their lives to utter such phrases aloud. Indeed, more 1,500 protesters are reportedly killed in cold blood. That's how serious opposition to Iran's government has become.

The Iranian regime's leader, Ali Khamenei, unfortunately will rely on the violent tactics of Raisi and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to slap down this explosive and growing popular discontent. He also will use the notorious Quds Force to expand his terrorist proxies in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. The more isolated Khamenei and Raisi find themselves at home, the more they will lash out with these types of repressive actions.

The result is a new reality for American foreign policy. The Biden administration has said that it wants to renegotiate a deal to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons. And on the surface, now would seem like a good time to press for such an agreement. After all, a weakened and desperate regime is prone to accept more concessions.

But that is a short-sighted view. An unstable regime of the kind in power in Iran cannot be a party to an effective deal for peace and security, let alone be a reliable or lasting partner. The U.S. and its European allies should realize that engaging with Khamenei and Raisi would not produce a meaningful outcome.

The only way to deal with the ruling Ayatollahs is to continue to apply pressure for change. The U.S. should continue to act forcefully against the rogue actions of Tehran. Firmness, decisiveness, and strength are the only attitudes the West should bring to the table, not concessions. The message was well received in Tehran after the recent U.S. airstrikes against facilities used by Iran-backed militia groups on the border of Syria and Iraq.

If the U.S. were to offer concessions to the regime, the result would be more aggression not less. Playing along with Iran's rulers at this point would embolden, even strengthen, the tottering regime, widely rejected by its people. No one should want that.

One way for the U.S. to keep the Iranian regime off kilter would be to call for an investigation of the leading role Raisi played in the massacre of 1988, when as many as 30,000 men, women and children in prison were executed because of their political leanings. Raisi should be brought to justice before international courts for these crimes, as called for by the United Nations, Amnesty International and a bi-partisan group of Members of Congress.

The U.S., Europe, and other countries in the region should turn their backs on Iran's ruthless rulers and look instead to the people of Iran as their legitimate partners. The so-called leaders of Iran are holding onto power by force and fiat, not by popular consent. Their time in control is coming to a close. Supporters of a free Iran – in Iran and in more than 100 countries including dozens of members of the U.S. Congress – will take part in a global summit that begins July 10.

The first step is to condemn Raisi as president. The next step is continuous and forceful opposition by the world community that will not end until a free, secular, and non-nuclear republic is established, allowing for the democratic elections to be held in Iran.

Alireza Jafarzadeh is deputy director of the Washington Office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran.

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